

The Effectiveness of the Family Hope Program in Bernung Village, Gedong Tataan District, Pesawaran Regency

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ABSTRACT

The Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan or PKH) is a key social assistance initiative in Indonesia, designed to alleviate poverty and enhance the quality of life for vulnerable households through conditional cash transfers. This study investigates the effectiveness of PKH implementation in Bernung Village, Gedong Tataan District, Pesawaran Regency, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research aims to evaluate beneficiaries' understanding of the program, the accuracy of beneficiary targeting, the timeliness of aid distribution, the achievement of program goals, and the tangible changes observed among recipients.

Data were collected through a combination of interviews, surveys, and direct observations, and were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings reveal that while PKH has contributed to improved access to health and education services, several challenges persist, particularly in targeting accuracy and timely distribution of aid. The study concludes that although PKH has been partially successful in mitigating the adverse effects of the pandemic on vulnerable populations in rural areas, there is a need for policy adjustments to enhance its effectiveness, especially in addressing the unique challenges faced by rural communities during crises.

Keywords: *Family Hope Program, COVID-19 pandemic, rural poverty, social assistance, Indonesia*

Introduction

The Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan or PKH) is one of Indonesia's flagship social assistance initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty and improving the quality of life for vulnerable families across the country (Airmas et al., 2023; Azhar & Badriah, 2020; Suriyani, 2023). Launched in 2007, the program provides conditional cash transfers to low-income households, particularly those with pregnant women, children, elderly individuals, and people with disabilities. The primary objective of PKH is to break the cycle of poverty by encouraging investments in human capital, particularly in health, education, and nutrition, thereby fostering long-term improvements in the beneficiaries' socio-economic conditions (Misnawati et al., 2019; Setiawan et al., 2021; Suriyani, 2023). Over the years, PKH has expanded significantly, reaching millions of beneficiaries and becoming a critical component of Indonesia's social protection system (Abubakar et al., 2022; Setiawan et al., 2021).

However, the effectiveness of PKH in achieving its intended goals has been a subject of ongoing evaluation and debate, particularly in light of the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Abubakar et al., 2022; Rasyid & Dulkiah, 2020). The pandemic has exacerbated existing socio-economic inequalities and placed additional strain on vulnerable populations, thereby increasing the importance of social assistance programs like PKH. In this context, it becomes imperative to assess how well the program has been implemented and whether it has succeeded in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable segments of society during this critical period (Abubakar et al., 2022; Chotim & Tedja, 2022; Djabar et al., 2022).

Previous studies on PKH have generally focused on its impact on poverty reduction, health outcomes, and educational attainment among beneficiaries (Aizawa, 2020; Kuntjorowati et al., 2019; Setiawan et al., 2021). For instance, research has shown that PKH has led to improvements in school attendance rates, reduced child labor, and enhanced access to healthcare services among the poor. However, these studies have also

highlighted several challenges in the program's implementation, such as issues related to target accuracy, the adequacy of the assistance provided, and the sustainability of the benefits in the long term (Capuno et al., 2019; Kipo-Sunyahzi, 2021). Despite these valuable insights, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the specific challenges and outcomes of PKH implementation in rural areas, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study seeks to fill this research gap by examining the effectiveness of PKH in Bernung Village, Gedong Tataan District, Pesawaran Regency, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The choice of Bernung Village as the study site is significant because it represents a rural area where access to social services and economic opportunities may be more limited compared to urban centers. By focusing on this specific context, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how PKH has been implemented in rural settings and how the unique challenges of the pandemic have affected its outcomes.

The central research questions guiding this study are as follows: (1) How effectively has the PKH program been implemented in Bernung Village during the COVID-19 pandemic? (2) To what extent has the program succeeded in reaching the intended beneficiaries and meeting their needs? (3) What are the key challenges faced in the implementation of PKH in this context, and how have these challenges impacted the overall effectiveness of the program?

The objectives of this study are to assess the level of understanding of the PKH program among the beneficiaries, evaluate the accuracy of the targeting process, analyze the timeliness of assistance distribution, measure the achievement of the program's goals, and identify the real changes observed among the beneficiaries as a result of the program. By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of the effectiveness of social assistance programs in rural Indonesia, particularly during times of crisis (Hartono & Ananda, 2020; Murhaban et al., 2022; Ulumudin et al., 2022).

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the effectiveness of PKH in Bernung Village. The qualitative method was chosen to allow an in-depth understanding of the program's implementation and its impacts as perceived by the beneficiaries and other stakeholders (Rasyid & Dulkiah, 2020; Yasir et al., 2021). Data were collected through interviews with key informants, including social service officials, program implementers, and beneficiaries (Defrizal et al., 2021). Document studies were also conducted to supplement the interview data and provide a comprehensive view of the program's implementation. The data were analyzed inductively, allowing themes and patterns to emerge naturally, providing insights into the effectiveness of the program during the pandemic (Loutfy et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2023).

Result and Discussion

a. Result

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan or PKH) in Bernung Village, Gedong Tataan District, Pesawaran Regency. The study reveals that the implementation of PKH in the village has been generally effective, though not without challenges. The effectiveness was assessed based on several key dimensions, namely, program understanding, target accuracy, timeliness, goal achievement, and real changes observed among the beneficiaries.

Firstly, regarding the understanding of the program, it was found that the socialization and dissemination of information about PKH to the beneficiary families (Keluarga Penerima Manfaat or KPM) have been largely effective. The program facilitators made efforts to educate the beneficiaries about their rights and responsibilities, as well as the challenges they might face while participating in the program. However, the study also identified gaps in understanding, especially during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, when social interactions were heavily restricted. This hindered the effectiveness of the socialization process, as face-to-face meetings were not possible, and alternative communication methods, such as virtual meetings or written communication, were not fully utilized.

In terms of target accuracy, the study found that the program largely succeeded in reaching the intended beneficiaries, who were registered in the Integrated Social Welfare Data (Data Terpadu Kesejahteraan Sosial or DTKS) and met the necessary criteria. These criteria included pregnant or postpartum women, children aged 0-6 years, children attending elementary, junior high, and high school, persons with severe disabilities, and elderly individuals aged 70 years or older. However, the study also uncovered issues with the accuracy of the targeting process. Some eligible families were not included in the program, while others who did not meet the criteria

received assistance. This discrepancy was particularly evident during the pandemic, when the demand for social assistance increased significantly, and the data used to identify beneficiaries was sometimes outdated or inaccurate.

The study also highlighted the timeliness of the assistance distribution, noting that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the PKH assistance was generally distributed according to the schedule. However, there were instances of delays, particularly in the early months of the pandemic, when logistical challenges and the need for strict health protocols caused disruptions in the distribution process. Despite these challenges, the program managed to adhere to the distribution timeline in most cases, ensuring that beneficiaries received the assistance they needed during a critical period.

Regarding the achievement of program goals, the study found that PKH has been successful in improving the well-being of the beneficiary families. The assistance provided under the program has helped reduce the economic burden on these families, enabling them to access essential services such as healthcare and education. However, the study also noted that the supervision of the program was less consistent during the pandemic. The facilitators were unable to conduct regular visits to the beneficiaries due to movement restrictions, which limited their ability to monitor the progress of the program and provide necessary support to the families.

Finally, in terms of real changes observed among the beneficiaries, the study found that PKH has made a significant positive impact on the lives of the families involved. The program has contributed to improving the living conditions of the beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their economic stability and access to essential services. The beneficiaries reported a noticeable improvement in their quality of life after receiving the assistance, which allowed them to meet basic needs such as food, healthcare, and education for their children. However, the study also pointed out that these changes were not uniform across all beneficiaries, with some families experiencing more significant improvements than others. This variation was attributed to differences in the initial economic conditions of the families and the level of support they received from the program facilitators.

b. Discussion

The findings of this study emphasize the effectiveness of the Family Hope Program (PKH) in Bernung Village, Gedong Tataan District, Pesawaran Regency, while also revealing areas that require improvement. The program's success in achieving its objectives can be attributed to factors such as effective socialization, timely distribution of assistance, and the positive impact on the beneficiaries' living conditions. However, challenges related to target accuracy and supervision were also identified, echoing the concerns raised in prior studies (Capuno et al., 2019; Kipo-Sunyezi, 2021).

The effectiveness of the program's socialization efforts highlights the importance of clear communication and community engagement in the success of social assistance initiatives. The facilitators' success in educating beneficiaries about the program reflects well on these efforts. However, the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for more flexible and adaptive communication strategies. The reliance on face-to-face meetings, as noted in other research (Abubakar et al., 2022; Chotim & Tedja, 2022; Djabar et al., 2022), proved to be a significant barrier during the pandemic, suggesting that future programs should incorporate alternative communication methods to ensure that all beneficiaries are adequately informed, even in times of crisis.

Issues with target accuracy reveal the challenges of implementing large-scale social assistance programs in a rapidly changing environment. The discrepancies in identifying beneficiaries point out the need for more accurate and up-to-date data collection processes, a challenge also recognized in earlier studies (Capuno et al., 2019; Kipo-Sunyezi, 2021). The reliance on outdated data during the pandemic led to both inclusion and exclusion errors, undermining the overall effectiveness of the program. To address these issues, it is essential to regularly update the data used to identify beneficiaries and to implement more rigorous verification processes, as suggested by Aizawa (2020) and Setiawan et al. (2021), to ensure that only eligible families receive assistance.

The timely distribution of assistance during the pandemic was a critical factor in the program's success. Despite the logistical challenges posed by the pandemic, the program managed to adhere to its distribution schedule in most cases, mirroring findings from other research (Hartono & Ananda, 2020; Ulumudin et al., 2022). This success underscores the importance of having robust logistical systems in place to handle the distribution of assistance, particularly in times of crisis. However, the delays observed during the early months of the pandemic indicate that there is still room for improvement in the program's logistical planning and execution.

The study's findings on the achievement of program goals and the real changes observed among the beneficiaries highlight the significant positive impact that PKH has had on the lives of the families involved. The program has succeeded in reducing the economic burden on these families, enabling them to access essential services and improving their overall quality of life. These outcomes align with the positive impacts of PKH on poverty reduction and health outcomes documented in previous studies (Airmas et al., 2023; Azhar & Badriah, 2020; Suriyani, 2023). However, the variation in the extent of these improvements suggests that the program's impact is not uniform across all beneficiaries. This variation could be due to differences in the initial economic conditions of the families or the level of support they received from program facilitators. To enhance the program's

impact, it may be necessary to tailor the assistance provided to the specific needs of each family, taking into account their unique circumstances and challenges, as suggested by Misnawati et al. (2019) and Setiawan et al. (2021).

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that while the Family Hope Program has been effective in achieving its goals in Bernung Village, several areas for improvement remain. Addressing the challenges identified, such as target accuracy, supervision, and communication, will be crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of the program and ensuring that it continues to provide meaningful support to vulnerable families in the region. The insights gained from this study can inform future efforts to improve the design and implementation of social assistance programs, particularly in the context of ongoing challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as also emphasized by Abubakar et al. (2022) and Chotim & Tedja (2022).

Conclusion

The Family Hope Program (PKH) in Bernung Village has played a critical role in providing financial relief to vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, its effectiveness has been hindered by challenges related to program understanding, targeting accuracy, and the broader impact of the pandemic on the economy and social services. While the program has succeeded in delivering timely financial assistance, its long-term effectiveness in achieving sustainable poverty reduction remains uncertain. This study underscores the importance of continuously refining social welfare programs like PKH to ensure they are responsive to the dynamic challenges faced by beneficiaries, particularly during crises. Future research should focus on developing more resilient social protection mechanisms that can adapt to and mitigate the impacts of external shocks such as pandemics.

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